# Living City

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ITALIAN: "Citta Nuova" Via degli Scipioni, 265 - 00192 Rome, Italy;

CHINESE: "San Sing Seung Yuet Hong" 70 Waterloo Road 11 B/F Kowloon, Hong Kong;

DUTCH: "Nieuwe Stad" St. Stephanusstraat 11, Nijmegen, Holland;

FRENCH: "Nouvelle Cite" 4 bis, rue du Montoir - F 92140 Clamart France;

GERMAN: "Neue Stadt" 8000 Munchen 83, Gleissnerstrasse 87, Germany;

PORTUGUESE: "Cidade Nova" Rua Pio XII 274 - Paraiso, Sao Paulo, Brazil;

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# The spirituality of unity

## Part two

*The following article is the second and concluding part of a conversation which recently took place when Chiara Lubich was invited to speak at a gathering of prominent Catholic leaders about the spirituality animating the Focolare Movement.*

A very particular will of God held a strong attraction for us. It was the commandment that Jesus calls his own, the new commandment, "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:12-13).

This command to love sealed by a mutual promise made by the first focolarine, (1) was to become the spiritual foundation of the entire Movement.

We lived it "to the letter," and it had extraordinary consequences because where charity and love are, there is God.

Whoever begins to live the new commandment notices a change in the quality of his interior life. One becomes enriched with new strength and ardor, and acquires the courage to start over again whenever it is necessary. It is no exaggeration to say that carrying out this commandment requires a real conversion in us.

It also has an effect on the world around us, because those who live in this way bear witness to Christ. "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn. 13:35). As a consequence of this witness, many people change their lives, others feel called by God and there is an abundant outpouring of graces.

Paul VI in his "Credo" says, that the new commandment is the main teaching of Jesus. "Jesus proclaimed and established the kingdom of God and made us know the Father in himself. He gave us his new commandment to love one another as he loved us." (2)

Mutual love among christians is a small reflection of the Trinitarian life lived among men.

The new commandment prepared us to put into practice another key idea which we then understood to be obligatory for everyone who lives this spirituality. It was the Gospel phrase, "Where two or three are united in my name, I am there in their midst" (Mt. 18:20). For those in the Movement, this is the norm of norms, the premise of every other rule. It ensures the spiritual presence of Christ among the members of the Movement giving meaning and life to the supernatural brotherhood which Jesus brought to earth for all of humanity.

"Jesus in the midst" is continually generated and regenerated if we are united in his name, that is, in him and in his will. His will for Christians is mutual love, that charity which brings about unity. Where there is unity, the world believes: "May they all be one . . . so that the world may believe" (Jn. 17:21). It is Christ present among his followers united in his name who converts the world.

The presence of "Jesus in the midst" gives a great contribution to ecumenism. In fact, although we Catholics cannot yet be united with other Churches or Christian communities in the celebration of the Eucharist, we can be united (when the necessary conditions are fulfilled) by Jesus spiritually present among us.

Jesus because he is charity, fills our hearts with joy over our new found brotherhood and helps us to understand one another, destroying centuries-old prejudices.

Because he is Truth, he gives the members of different Christian churches who are united in his name the light of Wisdom which is essential for the solution of theological difficulties.

Since our Movement is Christianity, another of its key ideas concerns the cross — the consideration and application of the passion and death of Jesus in the lives of individuals and of the Movement as a whole.

Through circumstances God fixed our attention on one detail of this mystery, on the abandonment of Jesus, who "towards three o'clock cried out with a loud voice: ... 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ..." (Mt. 27:46). This was the climax of his

*" 'Jesus in the midst' is continually generated and regenerated if we are united in his name, that is, in him and in his will. His will for Christians is mutual love, that charity which brings about unity."*

suffering, his interior passion, his darkest night.

It is the drama of God himself who cries, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?..."

This infinite mystery, this fathomless suffering which Jesus experienced as a man, reveals the extent of his love for men. He wanted to bridge the separation between mankind and the Father by taking this separation upon himself.

The experience of the Movement throughout these years confirms the fact that all of man's sufferings are summed up in this particular suffering of Jesus.

Are not those who suffer, those who are lonely, those who are unfulfilled, or disappointed, those who fail, and those who are weak similar to him?

Is not every sorrowful division among brothers, among Churches, an image of him; every sorrowful division among fragments of humanity with contrasting ideologies, an image of him? Is not the atheistic, secularized world which has fallen into every kind of aberration the very figure of Jesus who lost, so to say, the sense of God; who, for us, made himself "sin?" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

In loving Jesus forsaken, the Christian finds the motive and the strength for not running away from these evils and divisions; rather he finds the motive and strength to accept and consume them for Jesus Forsaken, thus being a remedy to them.

This, then, is Jesus Forsaken, the key to unity, the secret for every renewal.

The alphabet has only 26 letters, but anyone who does not know them and who does not grasp a few grammar rules, remains illiterate his whole life. The Gospel is a small book, but those who do not live the words it contains, remain so to say, underdeveloped Christians. They portray an image of the Church which does not give witness to Christ its founder.

From the outset, the Holy Spirit suggested to the Movement a radical re-evangelization of its way of thinking, of loving, of willing, of living. And, just as in the beginning of the Church and now after the Council (cf. DV 21), the Church has given the same value to communion with the word of God as it has to communion with the Body of Christ. This, too, has been the way of the Movement.

The word of God is unique, clear, eternal and universal. The word of God is a presence of God. Communicating with the word liberates, purifies, converts, gives comfort, joy and wisdom. It produces works and vocations, but it also attracts the hatred of the world. The word generates Christ in our souls and in the souls of others.

Each month a phrase from the Gospel with a short exegetical commentary is presented to all the members of the Movement. We call this phrase, the Word of Life. It is another fundamental point of our spirituality.

Everyone lives this word each day, all day long and, in this way, remains enlightened from within because to live his word is to love God. It is written, "I too will love him and reveal myself to him" (Jn. 14:21).

The experiences lived are shared with our brothers and sisters who with their material goods, also put in common their spiritual goods. In a spiritual communion the ascent to sanctity, which is a fruit of the life of the Gospel, is made together.

Another fundamental point of the spirituality of the Movement is the Eucharist. Thomas Aquinas tells us, "The particular effect of the Eucharist is the transformation of man into God;" (3) that is, man's divinization. The Second Vatican Council says that through the Eucharist the Christian is changed into the Christ he receives.

Almost all the members of the Movement, since the very beginning, have spontaneously felt the need to communicate each day with Jesus in the Eucharist. We consider this to be one of the main causes of the strong reality of unity that has been created within the Movement itself. Jesus in the Eucharist is, in fact, the bond of unity, the most powerful cause of a deep unity. It is through the Eucharist that the communion of men with God and of men among themselves comes about. And Jesus, before asking the Father "May they all be one as you Father are in me and I in you..." (Jn. 17:21), instituted the sacrament that would make this possible.

At his death, the man who is divinized through the Eucharist, leaves his body to the earth thus

becoming almost the Eucharist of the earth joined, so to say, with the risen Christ. He participates in the renewal of the cosmos and the reunification of the cosmos with its Creator.

Another fundamental point of our spirituality is Mary, the mother of the Movement. This says everything. She is our mother because God gave her to us, and we have always felt her to be our mother.

Just as a child instinctively says "mamma" as its first word, so too the Movement urged, we believe, by the Holy Spirit, called itself the "Work of Mary" (and was approved under this name). Its gatherings, centers, and the little cities built by the Movement are called Mariapolis (the city of Mary). Mary is the model for each member of the Movement. Just as she had the primordial function of being the mother of the physical Christ, the Movement, as a bishop has said, has as its main function, that of spiritually giving Christ to the world.

She is the model of the people of God which the Second Vatican Council often mentioned because she is the lay person par excellence. She is the Virgin, the example for every fiance, every spouse, every mother, and every widow. Above all, she is for us, the disciple par excellance: the perfect Christian, the living word of God.

The Movement venerates Mary, its mother and founder, in all her prerogatives, but especially as "Mother of the Church." She is the one, in fact, who is preparing the Church as it will be in the future also through the spreading of this spirituality of hers among non catholic Christians and faithful of other religions.

An additional point of our spirituality is the presence of Jesus in the hierarchy of the Church. In addition to faith for which members of the Movement believe that Christ is present in his ministers, the Pope and the Bishops, the Movement has also 30 years of experience which proves this to be true.

Therese of Lisieux states, "His creatures are all at his service and he — Jesus — loves to make use of them during the night of life in order to conceal his adorable presence. Nevertheless, he does not conceal himself to such an extent that we cannot catch sight of him." (4)

This is what we have always experienced, on every occasion. As the Movement continued to develop we saw, almost with our eyes, that it was Jesus, present in those who represent the Church that was directing everything: Jesus who studied us, who encouraged us, who corrected us, who guided us.

It has been a strong experience. For those who believe and live according to the words, "Whoever listens to you listens to me," (Lk. 10:16) it becomes easy to be convinced that Christ is present in those men who, despite their human shortcomings, represent God to us.

This presence of Christ was underlined by the Gospel and defended by the Fathers of the Church; the saints believed in it and Popes spoke about it in a splendid manner.

Because of this solid faith the Movement has always been united to the Holy Father and the Bishops as branches to the vine. Believing in Christ, the head, present in people in authority in the Church, the members of the Movement have tried to fulfill not only their commands, but also their wishes as well. The fact that the Movement has spread throughout the whole world is due to this attitude toward authority which has kept the branches united to the vine.

Some other key ideas then (but how many more there would be and how fundamental!).

One is about the presence of Jesus in us, for example, and the development of our spiritual life in its various stages. We found it to be very similar to traditional spiritualities while being very original.

Another key idea is about the presence of Jesus in our brothers and sisters. It is this understanding that prompted the Movement to work at different projects in favor of the "least ones" of the Gospel, especially there where society is most wounded and in need of help.

One could ask, what is so unique about this spirituality? Catherine of Siena affirms that you can know something well by studying it, but you can know it even better by studying its opposite.

In the things of God, as with a spirituality, there are no opposites. Good is always good. There is, however, a variety and so we could paraphrase Catherine's words in this way. A spirituality can be known well by studying it, and we can know it even better by comparing it with others.

If we think for a moment of other spiritualities which have emerged in the Church and that even today adorn the Church, the Spouse of Christ with light and children, we see they can all be expressed in a word: *poverty* for the spirituality of Francis of Assisi, *blood and fire* for the spirituality of Catherine of Siena, *obedience* for the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, *prayer* for Theresa of Avila, we could go on and on. . .

What about our spirituality? I would say that it could be summed up in the word *unity*. What is our spirituality, therefore? It is christianity viewed from the last prayer of Jesus. It is a communitarian spirituality suited to this age which, even though in the midst of evils and dangers of all kinds, tends toward unity. This tendency can be seen from the most contrasting social and political aspirations of our times and from the emergence and multiplication of international organizations dedicated to promoting unity. The Holy Spirit shows us this by urging all Christians to unite after centuries of immobility. He also inspires the pope to broaden the dialogue between Catholics and other Christians to the faithful of other religions and to men of good will in order to encourage the formation of one people on earth.

**Chiara Lubich**

1) Focolarini: Single men and women and married persons who have totally consecrated their lives to God within the Focolare Movement.
2) Teachings of Paul VI, Poliglotta Vaticana, 1968, VI, p.303.
3) Thomas of Aquinas, "Sent." IV, dist.12, a.i.
4) c.f. Therese of Lisieux, *Letters*, Rome 1970, p.597.

# POVERTY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

## Part two

by Fr. Pascal Foresi

*The following article examines the doctrine on poverty and wealth as it was formulated in the words of Jesus and recounted by the evangelists in some episodes from the Gospel.*

## The rich young man

"As he was setting out on a journey, a man came running up, knelt down before him and asked, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to share in everlasting life?' Jesus answered, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and your mother.' He replied, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my childhood.' Then Jesus looked at him with love and told him, 'There is one thing more you must do. Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me.' At these words the man's face fell. He went away sad, for he had many possessions. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!'

"The disciples could only marvel at his words. So Jesus repeated what he had said, 'My sons, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'

"They were completely overwhelmed at this, and exclaimed to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus fixed his gaze on them and said, 'For man it is impossible but not for God. With God all things are possible.'

"Peter was moved to say to him, 'We have put aside everything to follow you.' Jesus answered, 'I give you my word, there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property, for me and for the gospel who will not receive in this present age a hundred times as many homes, brothers or sisters, mothers, children and property — and persecution besides — and in the age to come, everlasting life.' "

"Many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mk 10:17-31).

This passage of the rich young man who runs to kneel at Jesus' feet, asking him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to share in everlasting life?" is reported with only slight variations also by Matthew and Luke.

Perhaps Jesus did not want the man to recognize him as God and so said to him, "No one is good but God alone." Probably only the apostles understood with this sentence what deep faith the young man had despite his rather overt homage.

When Jesus listed those particular commandments from the tab-

lets of the law which bear upon our neighbor, he was almost affirming that if we observe these, we also observe those that bear upon God. The young man said to Jesus, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my childhood." In that moment, Jesus looked at him and loved him and, loving him, wanted to give him God's greatest gift: freedom from every earthly obstacle in order to fill him with the joy of heaven. He said to him, "There is one more thing you must do. Go and sell what you have and give the money to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me."

Many exegetes see here the basis for the evangelical counsels but actually, there is nothing vague about the call of Jesus. In this passage, there is no basis for a distinction between the ordinary and the perfect Christian. The call of God, as it appears in Mark, is addressed not just to the rich young man but to everyone, even if not everyone can or actually should rid himself materially of his riches; however, everyone must do so if his possessions would hold him back from following Jesus.

The young man was very rich and he did not want to give up his wealth. "At these words, the man's face fell. He went away sad..."

Immediately following this passage the gospel sets forth for us, considerations of Jesus on the subject of wealth. These are reported by all three Synoptics, with slight differences.

In order to show how hard it will be for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus used a paradoxical image. He said in fact, "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!" Throughout the centuries, this example has led many to interpret the word "camel" to mean "large rope"; thereby changing a vowel of the Greek word; or else to maintain that the expression "eye of a needle" indicated a small narrow door in the walls of Jerusalem.

It is not necessary, however, to resort to such sophisticated interpretations. Jesus used paradoxes when he spoke of mountains being moved and of a plank in one's eye. The Eastern way of speaking sanctioned the use of such images.

The apostles were more than ever astonished. "Then who can be saved?" Jesus showed them the new way of salvation which was also for the rich: God! In fact, only he can draw the hearts of the prosperous and affluent to see that which can be seen only by faith and to leave aside the material world.

This is not a true condemnation of wealth in itself; rather it is a disclosure of its extreme dangerousness.

At this point, Jesus takes up the moral aspect of the problem. He had stated its social aspect when he told the young man, "Sell what you have and give the money to the poor ..."

The third passage, refers to the reward for those who have left everything. This too is reported by the first three evangelists. Luke and Matthew seem to regard the reward only in spiritual terms. Mark, however, distinguishes between the present time in which one receives one hundred times over, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — as well as persecutions — and the future era in which one will have "eternal life." This is the only instance in Mark's Gospel where a distinction is made between the present and the future. Because of this and because of the difficulty admitting a reward here on earth, many exegetes — including St. Jerome — tend to attribute only a spiritual meaning to this promise. However, many modern commentators maintain, and justly so, that when Jesus spoke, he had in mind the small community already existing which had multiplied everyone's sisters, mothers, children — and fields, this being even more true in the context of the first Christian community when the Gospel of Mark was written.

Jesus' promise does not lead — as some fear — to selfishness. If one is not truly detached, he will not receive the hundredfold, just as he will not have a new family if he does not truly abandon the old one for God alone. One cannot lean on the community.

These three passages were linked together by the apostles, though in all probability they are comprised of sayings uttered at different times. They represent the "magna carta" of Jesus' doctrine on wealth and poverty to which we can always return.

## Zaccheus

"Entering Jericho, he passed through the city. There was a man there named Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector and a wealthy man. He was trying to see what Jesus was like, but being small in stature, was unable to do so because of the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

When Jesus came to the spot, he looked up and said, 'Zacchaeus, hurry down. I mean to stay at your house today.' He quickly descended, and welcomed him with delight. When this was observed, everyone began to murmur, 'He has gone to a sinner's house as a guest.' Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, 'I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor. If I have defrauded anyone in the least, I pay him back fourfold.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, for this is what it means to be a son of Abraham. The Son of Man has come to search out and save what was lost' " (Luke 19:1-10).

Jericho was a small Judean town bordering the Arab world. Shipments of balm would pass through Jericho on its way to Arabia and this fact made the senior tax collector an important person.

He was wealthy as Luke tells us, and the chief of the Publicans who were officially responsible for collecting taxes and tolls. The Jews despised this profession and frequently likened it to prostitution because it dealt in theft and abuse of power.

Our Zacchaeus since he was rich was considered "a very difficult case." "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:24).

But Zacchaeus was prepared for his hour of God. Wanting to see the Teacher but not able to look from his neighbor's balconies — probably because he was not accepted — Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree with wide, outstretched branches.

Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. I mean to stay at your house today."

Jesus was able to call the head of the Publicans by name because he knew everything; above all, he *had* to stop at Zacchaeus' house. The benevolence of God toward this publican sinner is manifested in Jesus.

Everyone in the crowd murmured, "He has gone to stay at a sinner's house." Here Zacchaeus shows us how a rich man responds to the message of his Master. "I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor," he said.

The doctors of the law required that in order to show sincere penance, one had to distribute one-fifth of one's property and yearly income. Zacchaeus gave half.

Regarding the fraud he had committed, Zacchaeus promised to give back four times the amount he had taken. Jewish law required such restitution only for cattle while Roman law imposed it only for proven theft. Zacchaeus applied this law to himself for all the fraud he had ever committed.

He was a rich man who knew how to pass through the eye of a needle. Because of this, Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, for this is what it means to be a son of Abraham."

## The burial of Jesus

"Afterward, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (although a secret one for fear of the Jews), asked Pilate's permission to remove Jesus' body. Pilate granted it, so they came and took the the body away. Nicodemus (the man who had first come to Jesus at night) likewise came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes which weighed about a hundred pounds. They took Jesus' body, and in accordance with Jewish burial custom, bound it up in wrappings of cloth with perfumed oils. In the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had ever been buried. Because of the Jewish Preparation Day, they buried Jesus there, for the tomb was close at hand" (John 19: 38-41).

Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple belonging to the larger circle of Jesus' followers. Although fearful at the death of Jesus, he found the courage as Mark puts it, to go to Pilate and ask for the body of his Lord so that he could bury him in his own tomb.

*"Joseph bought a linen sheet, took the body down, wrapped it in the sheet and placed it in a grave which had been dug out of the rock."*

*(Mk. 15:46)*

He owned a garden near Calvary where a tomb had been prepared for the use of his family. It was new, a sign of distinction for Jesus. The body of Jesus was not embalmed although another disciple, Nicodemus, had brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. The myrrh was a perfumed resin which, when combined with aloes, delays the odor of the body's decomposition.

In this vivid description of Jesus' burial, we find two disciples who, although not among Jesus' closest followers, were nevertheless the only ones remaining to care for his body; the apostles had fled. They were both very well-to-do and yet the Gospel speaks highly of them.

### CONCLUSION

The rich, too, have a place alongside the slaves, the poor, and the servants following Jesus. We see them placing their wealth though not all at the service of the poor, at the service of others. No longer will they be rich in the true and proper sense of the word; rather, they have become administrators of their goods and concerned for the needs of others. They will be poor in spirit, which does not mean to be just spiritually poor.

The social significance of the poverty which Jesus required originates here. To try and draw an elaborate social doctrine from the texts then in use might appear to be arduous and anachronistic. We will certainly not find our problems — expressed in today's terms — in these words spoken 2,000 years ago in that historical context. However, when we meditate on these same words today, the principles which they contain help us to understand the Gospel's vast, social message, which has given its imprint to every type of society and every type of economy and it will certainly give it to the societies and the economies of tomorrow, Christianizing them.

# The escalator

At the top I
watch and see
an endless
flow of people
One, two, three . . .

Here they step off
and go
each instant . . .
like my life.

An instant
to step on and
then step off
A precious instant
if it's lived in love.

*Ellen*

*Photos by Claude Blanc*

# WORD OF LIFE

"He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end."

(John 13,1)

Do you know at what point this sentence appears in the Gospel? John, the evangelist tells us it was at the last supper when Jesus was about to wash the feet of his disciples and prepare for his passion.

During the last moments that Jesus spent with his own, he revealed in the highest and most open way the love he had always felt for them.

*"He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end."*

The words "to the end" mean to the end of his life, to his very last breath. But there is also the idea of perfection, that is to say, he loved them completely, totally, with extreme intensity, to the highest degree.

The disciples will stay in the world while Jesus will go to his glory. They shall feel alone, they will have many trials to face. It is precisely for those moments that Jesus wanted to make them feel sure of his love.

*"He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end."*

Don't you detect in this sentence Jesus' style of life and way of life and way of loving? He washed the feet of his disciples. His love made him stoop to do this lowly service which in those days was done only by slaves.

After having given his extraordinary words, his miracles and all his deeds, Jesus was now preparing for the tragedy of Calvary, in order to give his life as well for "his own" and all men.

They had a need for it, the greatest need any man can have: the need to be liberated of sin, which means freed from death and regain the possibility to enter the kingdom of heaven. Only he could give them the peace and joy of everlasting life.

Jesus offered himself up to death and crying out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" reached the very end and said, "It is finished."

*"He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end."*

There is in these words the strong bond of God's love and the tender affection of a brother. Since Christ lives in us, we Christians can also love like this.

But it is not the imitation of Jesus in actually dying for the others (when his hour came) that I propose to you right now, nor do I hold up to you models like Father Kolbe who died for a fellow prisoner, or Father Damien who having contracted leprosy died with and for the people he had been serving for years.

It may be that you will never, in the course of your lifetime, be asked to give your physical life for your brothers. But what God certainly does ask of you is that you love them "to the end," to the very point where you too can say, "It is finished."

This is what eleven year old Cetti who lives in Italy has done. She saw that her classmate and friend Georgina was extremely sad. She tried to calm her down but to no avail. So she decided to do more and find out why her friend was so sad. She learned that Georgina's father had died and that her mother had left her alone, with her grandmother, and had gone to live with another man. Cetti was aware of the tragedy and decided to do something about it. Though she was only a little girl, she asked Georgina to let her talk to her mother, but Georgina begged her to first go with her to visit her father's grave. With great love Cetti went with her and overheard her sobbing and imploring her father to take her with him. Cetti felt brokenhearted. There was a little old church in the cemetery and the two girls went in. The only things left inside the church were a small tabernacle and a crucifix. Cetti said, "Look, everything in this world is going to be destroyed but the crucified one and the Eucharist will always be with us." Georgina dried her tears and replied, "Yes, you are right!" Then with tender love Cetti took Georgina by the hand and led her to her mother. When they got there Cetti turned to the mother and with determination said, "I know this is none of my business, but I am telling you that you left your daughter without a mother's love which she needs so badly and I'm telling you too that

*(continued on page 10)*

# EXPERIENCES

**Each month a "Word of Life" appears in Living City or in its Supplement. The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Word of Life.**

*(continued from page 10)*

you will never have peace until you repent and take your child back to live with you."

The following day Cetti met Georgina in school and lovingly tried to keep up her spirit. But something new happened that day: a car came to pick Georgina up after school. It was her mother, and from that day on the car has kept coming regularly because now Georgina lives with her mother who no longer has any relationship with the man she lived with.

Looking at the small yet big deed Cetti did we can now say, "It is finished." She did everything well "to the end," and she achieved what she set out to do.

Think about it. How many times have you started to take care of someone and then abandoned him or her, using every possible excuse to silence your conscience? How many things have you started with enthusiasm and then stopped because of difficulties you felt were beyond your strength?

This is the lesson Jesus is giving you today, "*He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end.*"

Love to the very end.

And if one day God should actually ask you for your life, you will not hesitate. The martyrs went to their death singing. And your reward shall be the greatest glory because Jesus said that no one has greater love than he who gives his life for his friends.

**Chiara Lubich**

## RECONCILIATION

I offended my friend and neighbor seriously by changing some mutual plans at the last minute. At first, I felt completely justified in my actions, but on the way to Mass that evening, I turned the car around since the words of the Gospel, "If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering"(Mt 5:23-24) kept going through my mind. On the way home, I saw plants on sale, and stopped to buy one for my friend. I went to her to talk. She said she did not want an explanation or an apology, that she would say hello to me, but that the friendship was over. I was very shaken by her words. The word of life for that month was "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28), and I felt I should do more, so after a few days, I gathered my courage and went to her door with the plant. Her husband told me that they did not want to accept the plant from me so I returned home. It became very difficult to live divided from neighbors to whom I had been close, and whom I see nearly every day. I realized that in this case, to "love my enemy" meant not forcing a reconciliation on my friend. I realized that my needing forgiveness was a suffering for me, and that living through it would give me a chance to embrace my cross. I began to try to do this. I had to make an act of the will many times to do this since after each encounter, I would begin to either resent them or to become depressed with my own failure. Also, I decided to try to keep this suffering between Jesus and me, since many mutual friends knew about the situation, and were ready to discuss it. I did not always succeed at this, but accepting this opportunity as a chance to love Jesus, helped me to control my desire to justify myself to others. As time went on, I saw that I could ask Jesus to use this suffering for my friend. This gave me peace, since it was a way of doing something worthwhile for her.

Finally, after several months, one day the phone rang, and I knew intuitively it would be my neighbor. I decided to speak to her as if she were Jesus. We only spoke briefly about a necessity. But that same evening, she came to my door, again for a necessity. After a moment, tears filled her eyes, and she said she was sorry for what had happened. I said I was sorry, too. We are now beginning to be neighbors again, with more respect for each other's rights and wishes.

**M. L.**

### WORD OF LIFE FOR MAY

" Be concerned above everything else with his Kingdom and with what he requires, and he will provide you with all these other things" (Mt. 6:33).

# Girl of the year

by Elizabeth Grijalva

I come from a large city, and I remember the early years of my life as being very happy. My family was a close one, sharing a lot of fun and laughter, and besides this, I had many friends. As I was the eldest child, and the only girl, my family treated me in a little bit special way; it seemed that I always had everything that I wanted.

Then, when I was six years old, I became ill, and the doctors told my parents that I would never recover my health. In fact, they told my mother to prepare to lose me, as they didn't know whether I would live.

At this crucial point, a new stage of my life began. I found myself completely separated from my family, and I felt very much alone. My parents couldn't even come to visit me in the hospital, because my disease was contagious, and I was in an isolation ward. Not only that, but after two weeks I lost all of my favorite toys, the things with which I was most familiar and which had been brought to me in the hospital. They were burned to try to prevent further contamination from the disease. And so, I lost everything which I had known up until then.

I was in the hospital for one year, a year which developed new strengths in me. This was a process I was not even faintly aware of at the time. It was as if I were being drawn forward by some invisible force, and while I did not understand it, I knew that I had to fight to go ahead and not let anything make me give up.

Gradually, I began to recover, and even though I was completely paralyzed, unable to move my arms or legs, I told myself "I have to do everything I can."

The hospital where I was staying was a Christian hospital, and the various members of the staff helped to continue my formation as a Christian in addition to caring for my physical needs such as proper diet and regular therapy. Perhaps it was during this year that I understood, for the first time, something of the immense love that God has for his children. I remember how, on one of the first Sundays, a Catechist came to teach me catechism. They brought a picture of Jesus carrying his cross, I realized that Jesus, being the Son of God, had suffered and had carried his cross all the way to the end because he loved us so much. I could identify with him as a friend, as a brother, as someone who had done, before me, the same things I was doing now. In particular, I was trying to learn how to walk at that time, and I would fall a lot. Then I would remember that Jesus had fallen too, but that he had gotten up again. That one simple fact struck me very much, and each time I fell, I told myself "I can be a little like him, and I can get up again too." There was something inspiring in being able to be a little bit like him in this way, and I was determined to do it. So, in spite of being afraid, and sometimes wanting to give up and not try, I felt that I had to keep going ahead.

Another factor which had a bearing on my hospital stay was that, at the time I became ill, I didn't know how to speak English. I come from a Mexican-American background, and my parents had taught us children to speak Spanish so that we would grow up knowing two languages. But since I was only six and had just started going to school, I hadn't really learned English yet. Because of this added handicap, I really had to trust completely in the members of the hospital staff. They were bigger than I, they knew what they were doing, and I was helpless. Learning in this way, to put my faith completely outside of myself, was an immense help to me when I grew up.

My memory of that hospital stay is that of a beautiful time. A new horizon was presented to me, a whole new world I hadn't known about, because until then I had been so loved and protected by my family.

Then, when I finally left the hospital, I was possessed by a very strong drive to catch up and not to be left behind. I refused to go to any kind of special-education classes, and in managing this, I was greatly helped by my parents, who were in favor of my decision. In fact, I went back to school into the same class I had been in when I started out, with my own little friends, from before my illness. I had learned English by necessity, and I had learned it much faster than anyone had expected. I was determined to achieve, to try to keep up with everything the others were doing.

For the next few years, there followed a series of operations, with tutors during my hospital stays. Nothing was neglected in the effort to help me learn to do any additional little task, to help

me gain even a little more strength. In the end, I was able to discard crutches, special braces, and special shoes. Now I was satisfied that I was what I called, at that time, normal.

Once I had left the hospital, spiritual matters no longer had much importance for me. At one point, for example, I learned that my aunt had made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady, asking her to pray for my recovery and to keep me in her special care. Although this seemed like a nice thing for my aunt to have done, it didn't seem very important just then.

School, however, was very important. Everything took on a new dimension. I couldn't waste time doing anything I thought useless. My health was very precious; I was convinced that I had been given back my life.

As time went on, I became more and more concerned with having fun. My friends now meant everything to me, and my goal became that of being popular, along with that of doing well in school, of keeping up, and of participating as much as possible in everything that was going on. I could say that I was trying to be perfect in everything that I attempted, and that I attempted the highest goals I could find. When the time came that I was finishing high school, I had to decide what to do next: to start working, or to go to college or the university. Since I had to choose the most difficult option, I decided on the university, even though I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. Everything seemed too confining; nothing seemed to be important enough for the life I had been given back.

Since I wanted to take full advantage of everything, I became determined to experience everything that the world had to offer. I had many opportunities, because I was living in a great metropolis. I learned how to drive. I took a part-time job. I saved all of my money so that I could buy a car, and that gave me a greater sense of freedom, of independence. "Now," I said, "I can really go wherever I want to go." What my parents said mattered very little to me. Finally, the friction at home became too great; I left home and took my own apartment. I thought that now I would finally be independent to the fullest degree.

But I was never quite happy inside. I didn't know what was wrong. It was like a little grain of sand, some tiny speck always irritating me from within, saying, "There has to be something more. Where do I go from here? What can I do?" I remember that I was studying psychology at the university, and I thought, "What do I do when I finish with the psychology studies? It's not practical."

And so I decided to switch to teaching. But there was something about teaching that didn't appeal to me, although I didn't know what it was. I was feeling very restless.

Finally, I made the decision that I would try to make use of all the experiences of my life — for example, the experience of the long hospitalization as a child, of being forced to learn at home for months at a time during the convalescent periods following the series of surgeries. I had also learned to do many things with my hands, and I found an occupation which seemed to fit right in with all of these experiences. Also, something inside of me wanted to do something to help others, to not waste those experiences.

So again I switched fields, this time to one of the allied health professions. This meant switching universities as well. My friends asked "Why do you want to switch universities? Why don't you at least find something at the same university, so we can still be together?" But I didn't have any strong affiliation with one particular place or one particular school. So, just as I had previously left home, I now left the university, without once looking back. I was going on toward a new horizon which seemed exactly appropriate — the perfect goal. I was sure that I had finally made the right choice of what to do with my life.

This conviction lasted for about six months, perhaps. I started to study, throwing myself completely into my work.

Still, there was something that wasn't quite satisfying, that didn't completely fulfill my expectations for this profession. So, searching again, I began to frequent different kinds of social clubs, and I became involved in community organizations, joined a theater group and became a member of a choir. In other words, I filled my entire life, day and night, so that every moment when I wasn't in school studying, I was busy in some extracurricular activity. I was in a sorority at the university, and I wanted to run. Something inside of me was pushing me to do as much as I possibly could while I could run, but always in the back of my mind I wondered, "Where am I going?" I never really stopped long enough to try to answer this question. I didn't want to, because I was afraid of the answer, which was "I don't know."

At this point, something very important happened in my life. I had finished school and begun working. Without my knowledge, one of the associations I was affiliated with had entered me in a contest for the Southern California Girl of the Year. In this contest, they pick one girl who is very active and talented and successful and who has contributed a lot to her professional community. I didn't even know that there was such a contest. But one day, after I had returned from a trip, my colleagues told me that they had entered my name. I remember then being invited to a tea and being asked, "What do you think is the role of a woman in society today?" To explain my reply, I must backtrack a moment to tell you that I had a close friend who had once told me, in passing, about a girl who had made the choice of God for her life. She, together with a group of her friends, had made a pact of constant and mutual charity, to live always loving one another, living the Gospel in their daily life, wherever they might be. So, at the tea, being asked about the role of a woman in today's society, this thought came to my mind. I told them that I thought the role of a woman in society was to be a presence of love, in whatever situation she might find herself, wherever she might be, and to live every moment for a higher goal. I could see that they were impressed with this answer. Although they asked me other questions, I have the impression to this day that this answer was the key to what followed.

That evening, the semi-finalists were announced. Out of some sixty nominees, I was one of the fourteen semi-finalists. I was overjoyed. I thought that I had finally done something with my life, and that this was like a reward for all of the things I had done, the things which had gotten me nominated. So I went home very happy and pleased with myself.

Two months later the finals for the California Girl of the Year were to take place. As one of the finalists, I went that evening, not nervous at all. I was very calm, there only to enjoy myself, because I knew I hadn't any chance of winning; I hadn't really done anything to deserve that. Looking back over the years, I thought that I had just kind of coasted along. While striving for a certain perfection, I felt now that I had never really put myself wholeheartedly into anything, and I was not quite satisfied with anything I had done.

That evening, there was a dinner, followed by a ball. Then there was to be the announcement of the runner-up and finally of the Girl of the Year. Even while I was pushing it aside, I felt a secret desire to be one of the runners-up. It was a natural wish, and it was strong. So, when the time came to announce the fourth runner-up, there was the roll of drums, and came the girl's name. It wasn't mine. I waited, thinking, "Maybe the third one." Again, I wasn't the one. After that, I had kind of stopped listening, and the next words I heard were "And the Girl of the Year is Elizabeth." I knew I was the only Elizabeth. Somebody gave me a push, and I went up. They put the crown on my head, and after that, the roses and the dance and everything else that followed was like a dream. And I said to myself, "But I didn't do anything to deserve this. Why? Why me?" It seemed like a knife inside of me, and I couldn't escape it. Was this what it was to be on top of the world? A reporter had told me, "You must be the happiest girl in the world tonight. What does it feel like to be on top of the world?" I just said, "Great!" But inside I said, "Big deal." I knew that I hadn't done anything to deserve it. The whole world looked like one big farce. Everything it had to offer suddenly appeared only vanity, leaving nothing but ashes. Everything in life looked hopeless. Going home that evening I could not stop crying. My escort couldn't understand what was wrong. I only knew that this couldn't be what life was all about.

Very soon after that, I learned that the state was having trouble finding teachers for the children of migrant farm workers. Here was my chance to do something with my life, to give something out of love for others after having received so much. So, I decided to give a year of my life for God. I left my job, and the big city, and I went to a small community in the beautiful farm lands of the California valley, to teach the children. For the first time in many years, I felt that I was doing something worth-while, something for someone else. That nagging feeling inside, of unrest, of not being deserving, left me for a time, as I realized that this was something of value which I had consciously chosen to do.

At the end of the year, I had to return to the city, to my job, to all the things I had left. Now, new questions arose. "I have given a year of my life. But where do I go from here? A year is not enough." I didn't know what the answer could be, but I thought perhaps it could be found in marriage, and I became engaged.

Then, I was invited to a Mariapolis, a summer gathering of some people who were living in the way I once heard of those many years before, trying to love one another and to live the Gospel in their

everyday life. Something inside of me said that maybe I should try it, to see what it's all about, I was considering going to New York for this gathering, when I won a prize — a trip to Europe. So, putting aside all of my subtle inclinations to go to the Mariapolis, I said yes immediately to this tour which happened to coincide exactly with the dates of the Mariapolis in New York. I packed my bags and flew off.

When I landed in England, the first thing I saw was an invitation to the Mariapolis beginning there the next day. This was too much of a coincidence, and I knew that I had to go and see what it was. So I went.

I arrived alone, not knowing a soul, and immediately I was surrounded by love, by people who seemed to have known me all my life, who really wanted to help me, to get to know me. They welcomed me with open arms, and I felt very much at home. I was impressed by seeing that this was a gathering which included people of all ages and walks of life. I saw Catholics, Anglicans, Quakers, and members of several other christian churches loving one another, living in a reality which seemed like a little corner of Paradise. I wondered, "Can this really be true? People sincerely living for one another, rather than for themselves?" My experience had been that you have to fight for yourself, stand on your own two feet, and get ahead on your own in this dog-eat-dog world. Now I had to see if this life was really genuine.

I had planned to stay for just one day, but at the end of that first day I couldn't leave something so attractive, so I stayed another day. They asked me if I was going to stay for the whole week, but I said "No" because I had to leave to catch up with my tour. The tour included more of Europe, not just England, and if I missed the charter flight I would have no way of getting home. Yet, the third day came and went, and still I couldn't leave. There was something too strong happening to me. A shell was opening up, a certain barrier that I had built around myself of a world that was artificial, calloused, and lacking in life, in substance. Now, with these people who, through loving one another, were to live the word of Jesus, "Where two or three are united in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20), here, with Jesus' love so close to me and so gentle, I suddenly saw that what I called a little grain of sand irritating me was instead the voice of Jesus in me. I discovered that it was a beautiful treasure, a genuine pearl, and I had to hold onto it and not lose it. I couldn't leave, because I had received a light, and I had understood Jesus as the truth. I saw this way of life as the true reality. It was as if the entire meaning of life had suddenly taken shape for me, and I saw that only in God, in following him and his divine will, could I be the creature he had created, and only then could I find my true place in the universe he had created.

So, I stayed the entire week. During that week, I discovered something which had been rooted deep within me but which I had never been able to put together: that suffering can become love. That Jesus had suffered and died out of love for us, and that his cry on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46) had answered all of the whys of the world for all time. Therefore, all of my whys — the "Where do I go from here?", my desires to fight for success, to strive to be perfect, to keep up with the others — everything, ever since the time I had gotten sick when I was small — all fit into place. It was like a masterpiece which I could see more from an intuition than as something concrete, a tapestry lit with a special light, and I understood with my soul rather than with my intellect, that the answer to everything lay here. I didn't ever want to leave, to lose that pearl, that light, not ever.

When the Mariapolis had ended, I said to myself, "But it can't be possible that it's over. It has to continue." Before I had a chance to think of what I could do next, the girls came up to me and said, "Would you like to come with us, to Italy? We will be returning to Rome and to Loppiano, and if you'd like, you could come with us." I said yes immediately! Going with them was a continuation of that same reality of "Jesus in the Midst," of living for each other. Besides, I saw Rome and other parts of Italy in a new light, actually through Jesus' eyes, because we had him in our midst. For me it was the hundredfold (Mk 10:29), since after having left the tour and those with whom I'd been traveling, I had now found something so beautiful for my life, besides the best tour of Europe I could have imagined. I saw it all as part of a big Master Plan, because when I got to Loppiano, a small city of the Focolare Movement near Florence, I met my tour group coming down from the other direction. My new friends suggested, "Why don't you go and just ask if you can rejoin the tour in order to get back home? Either that, or you can stay here." But I felt inside that I had to bring this new reality I had found back into my ordinary, daily life, and to live this choice of the Gospel, bringing its light and warmth to my friends at home.

And so I went back to California with my immense discovery and with a tremendous desire to give it to the whole world. Some of the first people I told were a friend who was in television, and another who was a disc jockey. They both just looked at me; they didn't understand what I was talking about. Little by little I began to realize that I couldn't talk about my new discovery. Instead, it had to become a reality in my life first.

One of the consequences of trying to live it was my decision to give up my apartment to move back with my family. Jesus had told us to love one another, and I wanted to do this, to love. I knew that the ones who loved me most were my family, and I knew that one of the first things I had to do was to re-establish charity with them. So, I went back home. My life at work gradually began to change, too; I was dealing with my co-workers in a different way.

But, in a very short while, I felt a growing unrest inside of me. I saw that I was too small to be able to accomplish this by myself. I was alone, and my desire to spread my joy to everyone, to share my new light, wasn't bearing any fruit. Nothing was happening; I didn't understand why my friends didn't understand me. None of them wanted to do what I wanted.

Then, I realized the importance of that line which had so fascinated me when I first met this group of people, "Where two or three are united in my name, there am I in their midst." So right away I put myself in touch with the Focolare in Chicago, they were the first people who came to my mind. Immediately a bridge was built between us, and I felt a new strength coming to me as the result of the rapport that we had between us. Even though we had never met, I felt very much one with them because we were living the same Ideal.

Shortly after that, I found myself driving with my brother, in a Mustang, from Los Angeles to Chicago. He continued to ask periodically, "But what are you doing? Why do you have to go all across the country?" I couldn't explain to him the drive that I felt from within, the urging to deepen my understanding of this way of life which I had found so fascinating but which I was too small to be able to live by myself. After being with those others in England and and in Italy, I felt that I was an underdeveloped Christian, and that somehow I had to strengthen my Christianity, in order to become what I thought God wanted me to be.

Although I went to Chicago to spend "a few months" to become familiar with this life of unity, the longer I stayed, the more I realized that this was an experience which was filling my entire life — it meant more to me than anything else. I wanted to be able to really build unity, to build a relationship that would not die, because it was a relationship based on something infinite, rather than on the fallibility of men. But I knew that this was something that I had to give my whole life to. So every time the thought of leaving came to my mind, my reaction was one of horror. "Oh, no, I can't possibly leave." This phrase continued to come to me, and as I talked to my friends I saw that I had to do the will of God in the present moment without worrying too much, about what I had been, because I couldn't change that, nor about where I was going or what I was going to become, because I didn't know yet. Besides, I might not even live to see the next day, for all I knew. But instead, I had to live each present moment and to try to love in each moment — to love the others and to love God.

In all of this, I found that there was peace inside of me, a peace which I had not known before. No longer did that worry, which had always been in the back of my mind, plague me — the worry of "Where do I go from here?" Now, it seemed to me that I had arrived, even though perhaps I didn't quite know yet just where I had arrived at. But I had arrived somewhere, and within me there was peace.

During all of this, I had continued to write to my fiance, who had also met this same spirituality, and who also wanted to go ahead and live the Gospel in his everyday life. Together we spoke about building an ideal family — a family where there would be Jesus in the Midst between the spouses, so that the children too would grow in this environment of true love. It was a very attractive vocation, and yet, more and more, I felt as though it too was not for me. A family now implied more to me than a father and mother and children. The whole world was out there, with many, many people to be loved.

I vacilated; I didn't really know what to do. And the words of Jesus came to my mind, speaking of those who have "...given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property, for me and for the Gospel...will receive in this present age, a hundred times as many...and, in the age to come, everlasting life." And this was such a strong call to me that I couldn't do anything short of what he was asking. I knew that this had to be the way for me, that my vocation was concrete and material — to leave everything and to follow Jesus. So, I wrote to my fiance, and I told him of my discovery and of my decision. Our understanding was very beautiful, because living the same spirituality, we could see that the house of God has many mansions. For him, the answer was to be married and to create a beautiful, ideal family, whereas for me, I had to answer the great love of Jesus with my yes to his invitation to me, to give my life to him alone.

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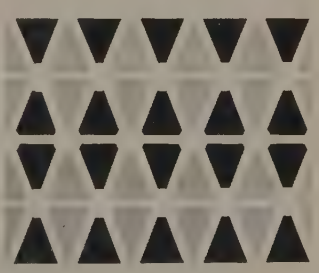

Originally presented as a series of talks on theology and spirituality to members of the Focolare Movement, the chapters of this book are intended to highlight the presence of Christ in the hierarchy of the Church. They constitute a harmonious and unified whole, characterized by a warm and lively presentation, serious theological content, clarity of expression, and all-pervading, love for the Church.
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# An African Maria Goretti

by Rosario F. Esposito

*Africa is preparing to honor the first Bantu woman to become a saint. She is Clementine Nengapeta, a young nun killed by a group of peasant rebels calling themselves "Simbas" (the Swahili word for liar), in 1964. Here we report on her martyrdom as it was described by her companions.*

*November 29, 1964.* It was early afternoon. The thirty four religious of the Jamaa order, some teachers and some novices, were still in the dining room celebrating the feast day of Sister Marie Andre and Sister Marie Clementine when a truck full of Simbas screeched to a halt in Bafwabaka Square, in front of "Nazareth House" where they lived.

The rebels broke into the house. Shouts and curse words alternated with moments of more reasonable behavior during which the Simbas affirmed that they wanted to protect the sisters from the "foreigners." They ordered the nuns to get ready to evacuate the house, taking only a few pieces of clothing and some food with them. They said they would take them to Wamba, capital city of the Uele region.

They were herded into the truck. During the trip the harassment began. The Simbas sang vulgar songs, and tormented the sisters by throwing all kinds of garbage and fruit peels at them. After spending a night at the Ibambi mission, at 6:30 a.m. they were put on the truck again. But at a crossroad, instead of turning in the direction of Wamba, the truck proceeded to Isiro. On the way they met a smaller truck with two colonels aboard, two of the highest ranking Simba leaders of the region. The nuns were forced to get off the truck and their crucifixes were torn off, thrown in the mud and trampled upon. "Down with this Jesus who is the white man's God. Lumumba is your God. You must stop wearing these habits, become like all other African women and give sons to Lumumba."

The colonels were convinced that it would be easy to make the women yield to their desires and ordered the driver of the truck to follow them to Isiro. They arrived at a country house at eight o'clock in the evening.

There Sister Clementine was subjected to the men's aggression for the first time. One of the men tore off her veil; another told her, "Sister, put it back on again!" "May he who tore it off put it in place again," she answered. She was assisted by the Mother General, Lucia Kasima Leontine, who remained with her, at all times giving her moral support.

Later the Simba moved the nuns to a house near the railway station. Clementine showed the sisters how her wrists had been injured. But she was firm in her resolution to resist what was going to come next. She kept repeating, "Virginity, virginity! I'd rather die than give in." The mistress of novices, Xaveria Bakoma urged her to eat something. "My spirit is oppressed," Clementine confessed, "I don't know whether I'll be alive tomorrow."

After a few hours the colonels ordered her and another nun, Sister Jean Baptiste Buhuma, to go out and get into a car which was waiting in the courtyard. Their intentions were obvious.

The two sisters refused to go with them. One of the colonels tried to persuade Sister Clementine to give in, but she proved adamant. When he realized that he could not convince her to do what he wanted, he turned to sarcasm. "Who do you think you are, with that ridiculous veil on your head? At home I have a fiancee who is much prettier than you are." "I couldn't care less!" she replied.

The Mother General and Mother Elizabeth Katenga, the superior of the community of the Bafwabaka had run out of the house to stay with the two young sisters.

They were severely beaten. Sister Jean Baptiste fainted at the first blow to her head. Sister Clementine kept resisting. One of the colonels struck her repeatedly while she cried out, "Go ahead, beat me to death; that's what I want." After having satisfied his anger the colonel called a few men and ordered them to kill her. They stabbed her in the chest mercilessly. In a last moment of consciousness before dying, she told her persecutors, "I forgive you because you don't know what you are doing."

The other sisters who were inside the house heard everything and were prepared to end up in the same way. One of the sisters, Mother Xaveria, wrote in her notebook, "Sister Jean Baptiste, martyr number one; Sister Clementine, martyr number two." She was ready to continue the list until her own turn would come. In fact the colonel who had ordered his men to kill Sister Clementine, wanted to kill them all. The sisters started to sing the Magnificat. The colonel rushed into the room, yelling, "We will pour gasoline over you and burn you alive!" They replied, "Thank you."

"We were all sure that we would die in the same way," Mother Xaveria later wrote. "Never did we feel so profoundly happy as on that night. Never in our lives had we experienced a similar joy."

They were subjected to all kinds of shameful insults. They were forced to undress and were violently persecuted. "But the example of our Sister sustained us and none of us gave in to the will of our persecutors," Sister Christane Bombogoni, then a novice, later said.

Sister Clementine, so small in stature, but so strong in her Christian convictions, remains an example for the Christian people of Africa and the whole world as well.

## Clementine Anuarite Nengapeta
## A COURAGEOUS WOMAN

Sister Alphonsine Marie Clementine Anuarite Nengapeta was born on December 29, 1939 at Wamba the capital city of the Uele region in Zaire. Nengapeta which means "nimble dove" is her pagan name. When she was two her mother became a Catholic and had her younger children baptized as well. Nengapeta then received the Christian name Alphonsine. She had great devotion to St. Alphonsus Liguori, from whom she learned to venerate Mary.

In 1957 she entered the novitiate of the African Congregation of Jamaa Takatifu (Holy Family) and after her two years of novitiate, she chose for her religious name, Clementine, in honor of Clement 1, a martyr pope. Anuarite was a surname chosen by her father, according to African tradition; it means "The woman who took war lightly." Even her pagan names seemed to be a symbol of her sacrifice.

She dedicated her life to the poor, the crippled and the derelict. After her novitiate she worked in education, teaching first in a grade school and then, from 1960 on, in the Teacher's College of Bafwabaka. She was aware of the need to prepare the future leaders of her country. One of her students said, "She devoted herself to us with all her heart. She was 'adamant' when moral dangers or bad examples threatened the purity of her pupils. She did everything to protect us from evil. She organized drama performances, choral singing. She took us fishing in the Nepoko River, or invited us to accompany her to catechism classes in the villages. When one of us had some difficulty in school, she would not leave us until we had reached the level required to pass." She was in fact, familiar with school difficulties. She herself had to work very hard to keep up with her lessons and homework. When she expressed the desire of entering a religious order she was told that her educational preparation was not sufficient. (She had just finished the fifth grade.) "I will repeat the year," she had answered. Her teacher, Sister Bertha Leclercq, said that she had never met a girl so determined to follow her choice of total consecration.

Today there is a blossoming of vocations among the Bantu people, but each vocation meets opposition from the clan and the tribe. The local leaders often force young people with a vocation to the priesthood or to religious life to go back to their homes and help the community. In this way many vocations are lost. One day Sister Clementine's mother went to the convent to tell her that the clan wanted her to return to her native city and teach in the Catholic school there. The young nun reacted with extreme firmness bombarding her mother with quotes from the Gospel. "Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God" (Luke 9:60), or "If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be my follower" (Luke 14: 26). She succeeded to convince her and remained in her convent.

Sister Clementine suffered martyrdom during the Simba rebellion at Isiro. She died on December 1, 1964, heroically defending her threatened virginity. On January 13, 1978 the proceedings for her beatification started in Kinsangani. The continent of Africa is proud to have given the Christian world such a courageous woman.

# A good deal

by Lucy Comolli

Jack spent many hours sitting in the sun on the steps in front of my house. Towards evening, before my parents would return home, he would leave. He knew what would happen if they found him there. Sometimes, however, unaware of the time (he certainly didn't have a watch) he would remain too late, and my father, seeing him, would shout, "Go home."

Jack, giggling to himself, would disappear down the street. My father, by then, furious, would enter the house mumbling to himself about Jack and all the people like him.

As far as I was concerned I felt sorry for Jack. He was completely alone. He had but a few tattered rags and his shirt was so coated with dirt that it might have been any color but white.

Often I would ask my father for some of his old clothes but when he would find out for whom they were intended he would suddenly change his mind. Yet, underneath everything, my thinking was very much like that of my parents.

Often leaving the house I would find Jack. Seeing him I would make every effort to pass him keeping as much distance between us as possible, being afraid that his outstretched hand might touch me.

He would speak: a conglomeration of words that his sick mind was not able to put in order. "Lousy misers, dirty politicians, upside down world!" Sometimes he would reach into his pockets and pull out various objects carefully wrapped in torn pieces of greasy newspaper and opening them he would hold them out for me to see.

"What's the matter with you? Where's your intelligence? Don't you understand?" he would say.

I didn't want to understand! "He is crazy," I preferred to think. Even sometimes I had the doubt that his purpose was to sell me those things. Such a variety of odd objects — a rusty alarm clock, a gold painted frame. But if it were true that he wanted to sell them, I would tell myself, he would probably spend the money on alcohol rather than food. It would be stupid to help him in in this way. I would walk away peacefully that I had acted like a good christian. I had greeted him politely and was even so kind as to allow him to remain on the steps of my house.

One day, as I left the house, he insisted that I stop. He waited till the few people had passed, and then winked mysteriously. With one hand on his pocket he reached out to grab my arm. Startled I jumped back. Besides the usual disgust, also a fear came over me. He realized immediately and without saying a word just shook his head. He reached into his pocket and pulled out one of his usual packages. He unwrapped it and held it out for me to look at — inside was an old metal crucifix.

I stood there motionless, lost in a sudden thought that was repeating itself over and over, "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me. Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?' And the King will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me' " (Mt 25:35-40). I realized I had never given him the opportunity to finish that sentence for me.

With a quick motion Jack returned the crucifix to his pocket. As he continued to watch me a questioning look crossed his unshaven face. He was, in a glance, asking for those familiar things, money, food, clothes. Finally, I recognized in him, Christ, and I had the impression that still another question was being asked: "Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me?"

"Wait for me," I told Jack. He laughed, thinking he had won. I ran into the house toward the kitchen when suddenly I stopped, recalling the words of my mother: "You are generous with the things that belong to others." She would say that whenever I would empty the refrigerator during parties with my friends.

She was right. I could not give Jesus something that was not mine.

I went to my room and picked up an envelope in which I had put some money to take to the bank. I ran quickly to the nearest store

*Photo by Therese Wagner*

and bought a huge sandwich. As I paid there was still plenty of money left. I returned to find Jack still where I had left him stretched out in the sun.

I placed the sandwich into his hands together with the envelope with the remaining money.

"Money," he exclaimed. He extended his hand and this time I didn't pull away. He shook it saying, "You are not stupid" and then, getting up, he left. He probably headed toward the nearest bar, but I didn't care.

I sat down on the steps and began to think about my savings account. It was the money saved for my dreams, the money for my great ideals — perhaps a trip to Africa for a few years of service, or maybe to specialize in the teaching of handicapped children, or maybe to found an orphanage. Everything was for the future — a future that might never come. Suddenly, I saw the dreams of the future disappear, but in their place I saw the present with new eyes. "For I was hungry and you gave me food..." This and many other words of the gospel came back to my mind. I could live all of them, instantly, without waiting for extraordinary future circumstances. It had been enough to live only one and the emptiness that I was hoping to fill one day had disappeared, and it all happened right here on the steps of my own house. I had the impression that my heart was dilated and that one after another, many faces would enter into it, faces of people that were known, but not loved.

Josephine, for instance, the pupil of mine that had asked me to be her sponsor for Confirmation. Maybe I should take some of the money from my savings and buy her not only the white dress for the occasion but many other needed things as well. There was also Roseann, who had invited me to spend some time at her house. I told her it was impossible because I was too busy but the real reason was that I didn't want to spend the money for the trip. I was saving it for my future without for a moment considering her loneliness.

And how could I have refused to help Georgia prepare her son for the test. She had ruined her health trying to make her son study. What if he failed I thought — suddenly feeling myself responsible for him.

Once more I recalled the sentence, "Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me?"

I thought I would give Christ my future. Meanwhile, in the present, I was denying him food, consolation, friendship and love. I decided to close my savings account the next day. I was determined not to let Christ pass near me in vain again!

Next to me on the steps, Jack had left his small package. It was the metal crucifix. I was not at all interested in the object and yet it had been a good deal, perhaps one of the best in my life. ●

by Piero Pasolini

# Horoscope - myth or truth?

*In the past few years there has been a growing "faith" in horoscopes, often justified scientifically. What does science really have to say?*

Each day hundreds of millions of men and women start their day by consulting their horoscope. Even the more prestigious newspapers feel it a duty to publish this sort of preview of the daily destiny of their readers with the certainty of reaching millions of people. Although read with a nonchalant attitude, their horoscope is perhaps the first thing which the newspaper so convincingly impresses on their brain.

Many magazines also publish horoscopes and articles on the subject and even many books are written defending and explaining this so-called "science" with various types of scientific argumentation.

Is the word "scientific" applicable to horoscopes? Almost everyone knows more or less the basic elements which are used as the basis for the horoscopes: the twelve constellations of the zodiac and the various positions of the moon, the sun, and the planets in relation to them and amongst themselves. The fundamental element is the date of one's birth in relation to the respective astral positions.

As one knows, the consulting of heavenly bodies in order to seek guidance certainly is not of modern origins. It goes back to the Babylonians in the eighth century B.C., who left us writings on clay tablets concerning the science of astrology. Today astrology and astronomy are two entirely separate things: the first being the "pseudoscience", or false science, and the other the scientific study of celestial bodies. In those ancient times astrology and astronomy were the same. Astrology spread through the Orient, Greece, Egypt and Rome. The emperors and the early church fought against astrology as being superstition. Later in the Middle Ages, it was further developed by the Arabs, who again used the scientific concepts of those times, so that its principles were accepted by the learned important people of that day. The emphasis then was not so much on knowledge of the individual's destiny, but on the influences of heavenly bodies on the evolving development of life on earth.

Even as recently as the Renaissance, scientists like Tico Brahe and Kepler, who are the founders of modern astronomy, believed in astrology. At the same time Galileo, who is considered one of the founders of experimental science, was decidedly skeptical, although discretely so, due to the heated arguments the subject could evoke.

Could there be anything true in the theories of astrology? Here it is necessary to make an important distinction between what can be the physical influences of the heavenly bodies on the earth (and therefore on organisms living on it), and those which are called "astral" influences: that is, influences on personal and social events.

Physical influences are very evident; but they are caused by only two of the heavenly bodies: the sun and the moon. It goes without saying that in the absence of the sun there would be no life on earth. It is practically the only source of energy (even petroleum originated as plants growing in

*Picture: Reconstruction of an Egyptian observatory. Ancient Egypt was one of the principal centers for the study of astrology.*
*Left of title: Copy of an Egyptian zodiac of the period of the Roman domination.*

sunlight). The sun is responsible for the recurring day-night cycle, the seasons, and even the precession of the quinox (of which I will have occasion to speak), which have created biological cycles; the principle one being that of wakefulness and sleep in almost all animals. There are also the various phases connected to the seasons. There is still another cycle of the sun which has to do with the minimum and maximum electrical and magnetic activities. This cycle lasts for 11 years and manifests itself by an increase or decrease in the number of sun spots. Although not everyone may be aware of this, it seems almost certain that these electromagnetic bombardments have an influence on climate and on the nervous system — therefore on man's "humor."

The influences of the moon are also not to be taken lightly. The tides are of great importance to man: twice a day in a reciprocal gravitation effect between the moon and earth, the water of the sea increases its level, following complex laws. The lunar attraction is so strong that in certain points the water rises 10 - 15 meters. This means that at that moment and in that place, one is a little lighter in weight and our organism almost certainly feels something. Even the 28-day lunar cycle (the lunar day) has influenced biological cycles in humans, animals and plants. Farmers have always taken the moon into consideration when planning their agricultural operations.

Strangely enough, astrology does not deal with physical parameters. It does involve the sun and the moon in its interpretations, but only in the "astral" sense, which considers only the geometrical combinations in which the sun, the moon and the planets are in configuration with stellar constellations.

Even in the science of astronomy there still exists the ancient system of regrouping stars according to figures called constellations. The ancients used their own fantasy and mythological legends in naming groups of stars which, in some way, resembled figures of animals or men or things in the sky; for example, the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, Andromeda, etc. These names have remained the same even in the most modern star atlas, together with the ancient names of more important stars. This is also true for the planets. In effect, the ancients knew only seven heavenly bodies moving with respect to the stars: Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The Earth was not considered a planet because it was thought to be at the center of the universe.

Today we know the true organization of the solar system with the sun at the center and nine known planets, including the Earth, rotating around it. The three planets beyond Saturn are invisible to the naked eye: Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

Among all the constellations in the sky, the most important to to both ancient and modern astrologers are those of the zodiac. The Earth and the other planets travel in a plane around the sun. (The plane could be imagined as a piece of paper which would pass through the sun and through all the planets as they travel around the sun). This plane is called the plane of the ecliptic. The constellations which appear to intersect this plane are the constellations of the zodiac.

# Horoscope - myth or truth?

These constellations are twelve in number and they correspond, approximately to the 12 months of the year: Aries, Taurus, etc, to Pisces. Astrologers also use the word "constellation" when referring to the configuration which results when the sun, the moon and the planets superimpose themselves on the constellations of the zodiac. Naturally, since the constellations are visibly aligned on the ecliptic circle, and since the sun in its apparent motion seems to travel along the ecliptic, it subsequently becomes aligned with one of the constellations of the zodiac. It is then said that the months of July - August correspond to Leo because in that period the sun is seen to rise in the constellation Leo.

The configurations due to the various positions which the ancient planets (Moon, Sun, Mercury, etc.) assume with the constellations and amongst themselves are endless. Astrology studies their various meanings in relation to their reflection on the general and individual everyday destiny of those persons born in the moment of a particular astral configuration. It is not necessary to use examples for one hears and reads of this everyday.

According to astrologers, each person is "marked" by the configuration which planets and stars have at the moment of his birth. This "mark" in some way determines each day of his life because of the reaction it has with the astral configuration of that day: this is what the daily horoscope is based on.

What can be said of this? Is it simply possible that the relative positions of far away heavenly bodies could mark the course of events, which are partly casual and partly due to the free will of man? From the scientific point of view there certainly cannot be any connection between the designs of the stars in the sky and any kind of activity on Earth. I have already spoken concerning the influence of the Moon and the Sun on the Earth and, as for the planets, their physical influence is imperceptible, given their distance from the earth. If there were any influence, it would last at most for weeks. The stars are completely out of the range of exerting a physical influence on the Earth.

As I was saying, astrology does not consider the astral influences under their physical aspect; it deals with influences which could more accurately be called magical. Moreover, they are not even influences, but simply markings or emblems. They could be called "information" of future events, cybernetically speaking — information transmitted from an unknown source, following unknown principles, and expressed through the various positions of the heavenly bodies which create a design or figure in the sky.

We are clearly in the realm of magic, similar to the reading of tea leaves or the crystal ball. This is a subject in which one must be cautious in expressing one's own judgments so as not to tread on the susceptibility of many who, although seeming to be skeptical, are actually serious in their attitude toward astrology. Galileo, as I mentioned before, assumed a prudent attitude, although he didn't believe in the horoscope. Entire groups of modern scientists adopt this attitude in the face of a resurgence of this astrological "faith" which is adapting itself, at least superficially, to our modern scientific culture, trying to assume a serious and scientific tone.

At any rate, it is certain that astrology has a concrete influence on society and on individuals. There are millions of men and women who arrange their schedules and adapt their attitudes according to the dictates of the horoscopes. A famous book carries a passage in a typical case. A fanatical astrologist was killed by others because, blaming the stars for the plague of Milan, he did not take any precautions. He died taking it out on the stars.

Sociologists and psychologists study this phenomenon. Maybe the increase in followers of this kind of "new religion" follows the collapse in this materialistic age of many of those moral and spiritual values which alone can sustain the human heart; and so one looks for his own destiny in the stars. These stars, totally unaware, would fall from the clouds if they knew they were responsible for so many things on Earth.

# FAMILY LIFE

**Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.**
**The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.**

## An Easter Celebration

Recently I had the idea of inviting a number of our friends to an Easter morning brunch. I particularly wanted to include those who have no family in the area with whom to celebrate Easter. My husband liked this idea too, so I went ahead with the plans. I had invited about ten guests. Then, I received an invitation to go to New York for a special meeting to take place the two days just before Easter.

Together Tom and I decided that I should go on the trip, but rather than cancel the brunch, he wanted to go ahead with that too. In thinking about the tight schedule, even facing the possibility that, if something unexpected should happen, I might not even be back in time for the brunch, I had some misgivings. But in order to be love for my husband, I said yes to his wishes. I knew that in saying yes to this plan, I'd have to do all that I could in the week remaining to make sure that everything would be ready for our guests without leaving Tom to finish all of the preparations at the last minute. Before the invitation to go to New York, I had planned to bake a lot of things and to take care of many of the preliminary preparations at my leisure. I had even told some of my friends about how I would manage everything. It is my style when having guests to keep the last-minute details to do on my own. But in this case, I realized that to be love, I would have to be very realistic about what was possible, rather than to just count on my good intentions in order to have everything work out fine. I would have to be more careful not to be ambitious beyond what we could realistically carry out.

So I sat down and changed the menu to make things a little more efficient, but at the same time to keep it very nice. I tried to make it so that if something did happen, and I didn't get back in time, my husband would be able to finish the last-minute details.

In the meantime, Tom was doing everything he could to help. We didn't actually divide the tasks, but I believe that each of us was trying to do the will of God in each present moment. And it seemed that, with each of us trying in this way, there was a new closeness between us. I knew that this was the fruit of trying to love in each present moment and to do the will of God as we saw it in that moment.

Some difficulties did come up! In actual fact, the tasks seemed to take longer than planned. To cook for that many people, even for a brunch, the cutting and shredding and so forth took a lot more time than I had anticipated, even in my attempts to be realistic. But things were going fairly well.

Friday came, the day I was to leave for New York. With all of the last-minute details for the brunch plus the preparations for the trip, I found that we were each changing our plans here and there, to try to do the new will of God for that moment. If this meant to leave the food and get ready for the trip, or whatever, we tried to do this. We tried not just to get it done so that our plans would work out, but rather, in each moment to try to do it as well as possible.

And so it was that on Friday I left for New York. I returned late Saturday evening. It had been a very full meeting and a full day, and even though it was about 11:00 when I got back, I thought that if I really did my part and plunged right in to get the food ready, I wouldn't have to worry the next day. Then my original plan would come true, and we would both be ready to stand composed at the door to greet our guests on Easter Sunday.

Therefore I began immediately cutting eggs and cheese and everything, and as I did, I became very much aware of just how much there was to be done yet. I felt tired, but there was a grace from the day and from the meeting, such that I was really trying to go ahead and to love. Tom had obviously worked very hard to have the house spotless, and now he was offering suggestions to me like "Why don't you use this bowl?" and "Please don't spill anything on the floor," and just being very concerned. For a moment I thought of saying "Why don't you

do it? You know I've been gone all day," or "I'm going to just leave it, and tomorrow we'll figure it out."

But in that moment, I tried to love Jesus in my husband. It seemed to me that to be love at that time, I had to remain silent and not to tell him how I felt. I knew that he had worked very hard and that he was tired as well. I tried to continue with my work, saying nothing of my thoughts, and not even showing by a gesture that I felt an additional burden because of his words. In a few minutes he appeared to be calm and no longer concerned about what I was doing or what might happen to the clean floor. In fact, he went to bed, leaving me to finish my tasks, leaving behind him a feeling of peace.

After working as long as I could that evening, the next morning things seemed to have changed. I had a sense of failure, finding myself on Easter Sunday morning with no possible way of getting everything done. The night before I had felt that I had the grace to really love, but that feeling was gone, lost in the concern of not being able to finish the preparations. For some reason, I could not even share these concerns with my husband. I was complaining about various things, mumbling to myself about how much work this was, and that it wasn't going to work out. I found myself comparing my state now with the way I had felt the night before, and in that moment, I couldn't go ahead. I seemed to be stuck in the failure of that moment, and I couldn't go on to the next one.

Tom didn't tell me what to do or what I was doing wrong or comment at all on my behavior. Finally I realized that he was really trying to love me in a special way, trying to be the first to love. I understood that in order to try to reestablish the unity that we had had, my part was to let him help and to go ahead working along with him. I knew that whatever the outcome of the brunch, the most important thing was the unity between us, that mutual love from trying to do the will of God together.

In the end, we were able to accomplish a lot together. Besides that, the composure and the peace that we experienced because of our efforts were very real for us, and I think that they were felt by our guests as well. It was true that they didn't find us standing at the door ready to serve, but there was an atmosphere of love in our house that day, and they volunteered to help us with things. My inclination is to say "No, no, no. Don't please." In the past, I wouldn't have allowed them to help, partly from embarrassment at having them see that things weren't finished and that everything in the kitchen was not in order. My refusals to let our guests help had, in fact, led to a kind of stiffness in the atmosphere. But in this situation I said yes to those offers, and the first guests who came helped us with a few things, and it became like a real family. It was a very beautiful brunch.

From these small incidents, we could see that trying to live the present moment, and trying to do the will of God in the present moment, led to a deeper unity between us. From this experience, we came to see that if we try to love Jesus in each present moment, we have the very real possibility of having his presence among us as one of the fruits of this effort. We understood from this too, that there is this same possibility in the big things of our lives. But in these little things which we experienced, it was very real for us and for our friends.

Kathleen Masters

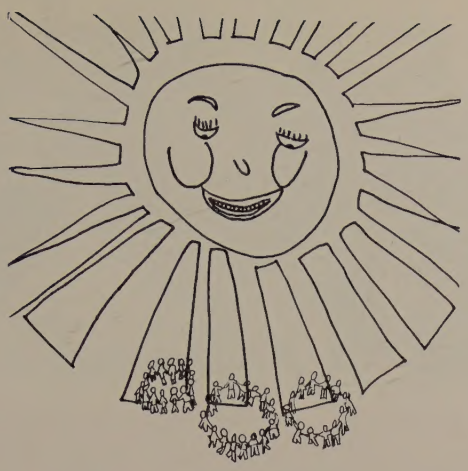
Just to add to what Kathleen said at the end, we share this experience with you, not because it's earth-shaking (I imagine most of us don't have many earth-shaking experiences in a week, in a year, in a lifetime). Rather, we share it because, at the end, we could see clearly that because of our conscious attempts to be aware of loving and living in God's will each moment of the day, a common incident, that of having guests over one morning for brunch, was transformed.

Through this whole experience, I found that I had to change the way I normally look at things, and this discovery made all the difference. Friday afternoon Kathleen left for New York, and I drove her to the airport along with a friend who was going to the same meeting with her. We were concerned about Saturday night, because her return flight would arrive during the time of the Easter vigil service in our parish. I really like to go to that service, and I didn't know how to arrange for her return. So I was very happy when her friend said, "Well, my son is going to pick me up, and he can pick up Kathleen too, and we'll bring her home."

So, Saturday I spent the day working to prepare the house for the brunch. It was easy for me to work fast on my own, and I was able to accomplish a lot. I went to the Easter vigil service feeling very satisfied with the productive day I'd had, and with the tangible results — the whole house was clean, even the kitchen floor. I returned from the service about 10:00 and called the airport to check on the flight. It had arrived twenty minutes earlier. This was good news, because that meant she was probably on her way home. We had had an ice storm that day, and I was very happy not to have to drive anywhere in it. But about ten minutes later, the phone rang, and it was Kathleen calling from the airport, asking for a ride home. My ordinary reaction, I think, would have been to say, "What happened to your friend?" But, perhaps because I had gone to the Easter vigil service, there was a kind of inner resource which made me understand, "This is what needs to be done; it's love to go and get her." So I did. It was a very warm experience to be able to do such an ordinary thing, driving her home from the airport even on a bad night like that. But by the time we reached home, my physical stamina had declined, and I reverted to my old ways. That was a

(continued on page 28)

# THE VERY YOUNG AND THE GOSPEL



*Michael (6½) and Joseph (7½) Tetreau are both Gen. (1) They shared their experiences with their parents who wrote them up for Living City.*

In school we changed jobs. I got the library. Because I didn't like the library job I was going to trade with Michael Smith. But he wanted his job too. I saw Jesus in him and kept my job. I decided to do my job with love and soon I liked my job.

**Michael**

In Math I fooled around with my friend because I thought Math was boring. I got behind in my work. One day I thought that the best thing was to love my teacher and to catch up. So I stopped fooling around and worked. But another day I started to fool around again. So I had to do two problems on each page to catch up, but the class kept getting ahead. Again I decided to love my teacher and work harder. Finally I caught up with the class. Now I will work to stay with my class because it is God's will for me to work harder in class and not get behind. Also, because I am loving my teacher Math is fun!

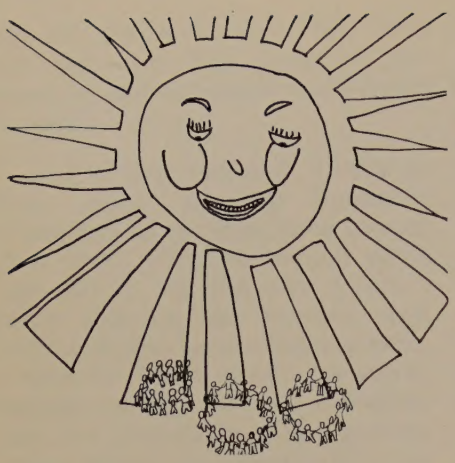
**Joseph**

In my school we started a Student Council. Each class was to choose one Student Council Representative. I wanted to be our class representative, but two of my friends were chosen because after three votes they still tied votes. I was happy for my friends. One day they had to go to the first Student Council meeting and they asked our class for suggestions about the school. I made a suggestion that "the whole school should love more and not fight." My teacher told my mother that our principal was very happy and that all of the student council were surprised that a first grader thought it up. Our principal asked my friends and I to make posters about my suggestion. Four of the sixth graders came to help us with the spelling only. We printed my suggestion at the top of the posters in many colors. Then we drew a picture of people helping each other. We made four posters. They are still hanging up on the school walls. One is by the principal's office, mine is at the Gym entrance, and two are on the 2nd floor walls. I am very happy because I want to live like Jesus and I want the whole school to live like Jesus too.

**Michael**

I was playing "Super Heroes" with my brother, Michael. We both wanted to be Superman. I suggested we play "pick a hand" to see who would get to be Superman. I hid both my hands behind my back. For Superman I had three fingers up on my left hand. For Iron Man I put five fingers up on my right hand. Michael picked the Iron Man hand. But, I really saw Jesus in him and wanted him to pick the Superman hand so I switched hands and told him to take a second guess. He still guessed wrong. Because I love my brother and see Jesus in him I said, "Let's do it again a third time and agree with this one." He guessed right and he was Superman. Michael was very happy and I was very happy. I got my hundred fold too because when we played different super heroes I wanted to be Batman. We picked hands again three times and each time I guessed Batman.

**Joseph**



*At the end of a Gen 3 week-end some of the participants shared with us how they had tried to love.*

"This morning I woke up and was ready very fast. I saw my roommate was not ready. I was tired and was just going to sit down until it was time for breakfast. Then I remembered to 'Do unto others the way you would have them do unto you.' So I went over and helped her make her bed. Then we went down to breakfast."

A. I.

"Today we were playing games and I was supposed to be 'it' because I had won the game before, but another girl said she asked first. I wanted to argue and say, 'No, I won,' but instead I loved Jesus in her and said alright because I thought that we should 'Love one another.' "

E. W.

"My act of love is on the part of 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' I was about to eat my lunch when I saw not everyone was seated so I waited for everyone to sit down. Then I saw that the Kool-Aid was not poured and I was very thirsty, but I gave mine away and passed the other glasses around to everyone before drinking mine."

T. B.

"We were eating breakfast this morning and someone asked for the syrup. I hadn't put it on my pancakes either, and they were getting cold, but I loved her and let her use the syrup before me."

M. C.

"I heard once that one day we will 'all be one' and this weekend I have been trying to love by being more patient, forgetting myself for the others like while playing games when my foot was bothering me a little."

J. K.

"When we were playing outside I was really cold and wanted to go into the house to get my gloves but instead I loved Jesus Forsaken and put aside what I wanted to do. A little bit after a Gen came up to me and asked to use my hat because she was cold and I remembered this was an act of love so I gave her my hat which helped me to put into practice, 'Whatever you do to the least you do to me.' And I received the hundred fold because soon after the sun came out and warmed me up."

S. D.

"Today when we were playing games there was one game I really didn't want to play, and everyone wanted to play just that game. And for them to play I had to agree and then I remembered, 'Do unto others the way you would have them do unto you,' and so I played."

L. P.

"Yesterday I was going to bed and everyone kept on talking. I wanted to tell them to keep quiet but I thought of God and I didn't say anything."

D. M.

"Today while we were playing I felt I was not helping to keep Jesus in the Midst and I found myself doing what I wanted to do. So right away I began to love again and play with the others."

L. S.

"Last night one of the Gen who slept on the top bunk bed while in bed said she had something to tell me but that she would tell me the next day. I was going to ask her to tell me in that moment, but I decided to go to sleep because also the other Gen were trying to sleep. I remembered to, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

C. A.

"Last night after I arrived it was time for us to go to bed. When I got into my room there were two beds. One was small and low and the other was big and high. I wanted to sleep in the big bed because I was taller and besides I never slept on a low bed, but my roommate wanted to sleep in the bigger bed. I wanted to tell her I should have the bigger bed because I was bigger, but as an act of love I let her sleep in the bigger one."

T. S.

"Today when I woke up I saw that one of the Gen was a little behind of everyone. She still had her bed to make and her teeth to brush and many other things to do. I was almost done with everything except I had to put my pajamas away so I left my pajamas in the corner next to my bed and I made her bed."

L. J.

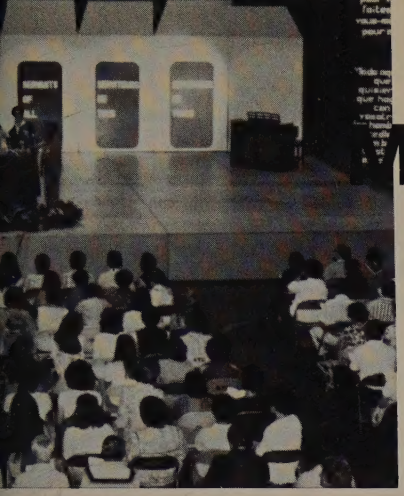
"Today in the morning it was time for everyone to get up and get ready for breakfast. But I was really tired and I just wanted to stay in bed and skip breakfast. Instead I got up and dressed for breakfast because I knew that it was an act of love for Jesus."

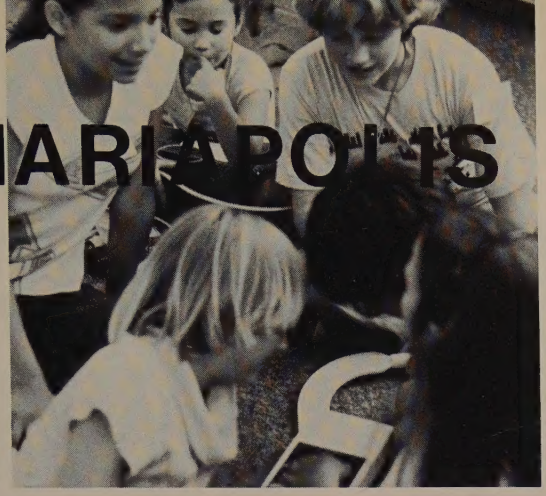
T. S.

"Today when my group was going inside after playing, a Gen asked me to hold the door for everyone so they could go inside faster. I didn't want to because it was freezing outside. But I remembered it was an act of love and so I loved Jesus in her and I did it."

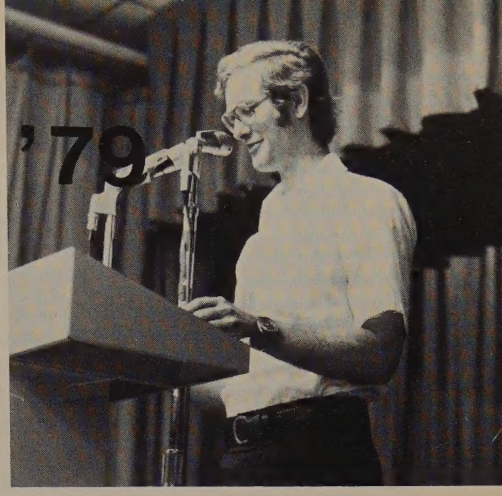
M. D.

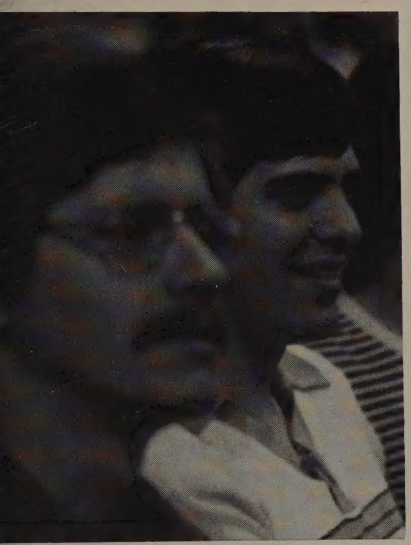
(1) The Gen are the young people of the Focolare Movement. They are divided according to age into the Gen 2 for teenagers and young adults; Gen 3 for children and Gen 4 for the little ones.





# MARIAPOLIS '79





We would like to call our readers' attention to the new dates of the East Coast Mariapolis. Instead of taking place from August 12th to the 18th, it will be held from August 5th to August 11th. We would also like to announce the dates and place of the Southwest Mariapolis as well as that of the Northwest.

SOUTHWEST

Place: New Mexico
Highlands University
Las Vegas, New Mexico

Date: June 24 - evening
through
June 30 - morning

NORTHWEST

Place: St. Martin's College
Lacey, Washington

Date: July 22 - evening
through
July 28 - morning

EAST COAST

Place: Alfred University
Alfred, New York

Date: August 5 - evening
through
August 11 - morning

*(continued from page 24)*

loss, but it was an opportunity for Kathleen to be the first to love, and as you know, she was able to do that.

The next morning, I could see that she was upset because a lot of things hadn't been done, and our normal reaction at a time like that (normal for any of us, I'm sure) is to be frazzled, to worry about getting things done. But because I was aware of loving her with more than just a human love, I was able to restrain the impulse to say, "Well, if you want to be that way about it, then do it yourself!" and instead, just kind of wait and do what I could do. She did regain her calm before we went to Mass.

Then, all during Mass she seemed a little upset, and right after the Offertory, she leaned over to me and said, "I think I left the oven on." Again, my normal reaction would have been to say, "So what? We'll buy something else, pick up some chicken or something." But instead, I had the strength to say, "I'll go home and check." I had been to Mass the night before, so there was no Sunday obligation for me to fulfill, and we only live a block and a half from church. So I walked home quickly and found that she hadn't left the oven on after all. Ordinarily, that would have been very infuriating, but I didn't feel that way because, again, we were trying to love in each moment. I walked back to church and got there just in time to receive Communion. That was an unexpected gift, to be on time for that.

By the time the guests arrived, despite all the obstacles that would normally have conspired to make this a disastrous experience, there was a kind of warmth in our house. It wasn't a warmth that we provided; it was a warmth that Jesus provided, I'm sure. And those guests who came, people we had invited because they didn't have families with whom to share Easter, I think found a family in our house that day.

Tom Masters

WHERE TO CONTACT
THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT
IN NORTH AMERICA

NEW YORK:
P.O. Box 496
New York, New York 10021

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 53426
Chicago, Illinois 60653

BOSTON:
P.O. Box 239
Roslindale, Massachusetts 02131

SAN ANTONIO:
P.O. Box 32302
San Antonio, Texas 78213

TORONTO:
P.O. Box 302 - Stn. T
Toronto, Ont., Canada M6B 4A3

anne marie zanzucchi
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